

Peter E. Viemeister. *The Lightning Book*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1961. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. 1972. (Prices unknown)

This is a splendid book for those who wish to know more about lightning or who want to know what to do about it. In our July 1972 issue we reprinted parts of an article about lightning. Some of the figures given do not tally with those in Peter Viemeister's book, and I frankly favour the latter if only because of the very extensive bibliography and the obvious amount of research that went into it.

The book is divided into three parts: "The Search for Knowledge", "Origin and Character of Lightning", and "Lightning in Action". The first section deals with the history of the study of lightning and thunderstorms all the way from early Egyptian and Greek beliefs to "Project Thunderstorm" in the 1940s. (He also later points out that it is most unlikely that lightning actually struck Ben Franklin's famous kite; though Franklin did collect "electric fluid" from the atmosphere by that means.) The second section presents a very clear picture of the "anatomy" of thunderstorms and of lightning bolts as such. It is a more complicated business than one might think, but he makes it intelligible to the layman. And in the third section he relates the effects of lightning and presents practical suggestions for protecting oneself and one's property. In fact, lightning rods are effective provided they are properly installed. They gained a bad reputation because a lot of fast-buck operators failed to do this, thus putting the poor house-holder in greater jeopardy than before! In any case, the safest place to be is in your car.

The book is well illustrated though, in the paperback edition, the photographs lose something in quality because of the paper they are printed on. There is a very useful list of codes and handbooks worth sending for—some free and none costing more than \$1.00—and also the names of manufacturers and installers if you feel you want lightning rods (in many locations they are really unnecessary). As noted before, there is an excellent bibliography—and a good index.

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